Redesign of Shannon and Headway Parks
Improving Their Accessibility, Amenities, and Facilities

by

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A report submitted to the School of Urban and Regional Planning in conformity with the requirements of the degree of Master of Urban and Regional Planning (M.PL.)

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario
Canada
April, 2014
Acknowledgements

“When you do things from your soul, you feel a river moving in you, a joy.”
Rumi

Thanks God for all of your blessings

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Leela Viswanathan, for all her patient guidance, encouragement and advice throughout this report process and the time I was her student at SURP. I would also like to express my appreciation for Dr. Patricia Collins, for her guidance and advice through the proposal process of this report. I would like to thank all faculty and staff of the School of Urban and Regional Planning and my fellow students (SURP 2013) for all their support and friendship. A special thanks goes out to Dr. David Gordon for his kind direction and guidance since I started this program. I would like to thank the interviewees from City of Kingston, Kingston Community Health Centre, and KFL&A Public Health who provided valuable insights into my report study.

My greatest appreciation from the bottom of my heart goes out to my lovely husband, Kourosh. His pure love, support, encouragement and companionship have continually excited me to progress. I would like to express my love and appreciation for my lovely parents, my sister and my brother. Nothing would have been possible without their constant companionship, encouragement and support.
Executive Summary

Public parks provide places for residents to experience nature, socialize with friends and neighbours and relax. They also play an important role in “facilitating physical activities” (Cohen, 2007, p. 509). Public parks and outdoor facilities should be carefully designed and planned in a way that consider visitors’ needs and abilities to create a more enjoyable and fulfilling recreation experience for everyone (Parks Canada, 1994). This report provides an analysis and makes recommendations for improvement to the accessibility and physical features of Shannon and Headway parks in Rideau Heights, Kingston, Ontario. The purpose of this report is to evaluate the degree of quality and accessibility of existing amenities and facilities of these two parks and also to identify what important physical features are absent in the study area. To achieve this goal, this report addresses the following research questions:

- What design and planning strategies will improve accessibility to the park, within the parks, and between the parks, for people of all ages and abilities?
- What design and planning strategies will improve physical features (facilities and amenities) within the parks in order to improve active living and physical beauty?

To address the research questions, three qualitative research methods were employed. In the first place, a review of relevant literature and parks accessibility guidelines was conducted in order to develop an appropriate parks assessment toolkit to evaluate for accessibility and physical features. Second, based on the created parks’ amenities and accessibility checklist, direct observation of the study area was carried out to obtain information regarding the existence and the degree of quality and accessibility standards of amenities and facilities in and around the parks (please refer to Table 4.1 for the summary of findings). The analysis indicates that many of the existing physical features (e.g. seating areas, sports’ fields, pathways, etc.) in Shannon and Headway Parks are not in good quality and do not meet accessibility standards. Moreover, these two parks do not have some necessary amenities and facilities (e.g. drinking fountains) that should be present in any public park. Based on the findings of the analysis, the following recommendations are offered to the City of Kingston, Parks Development, North Kingston Community Health Centre and Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (CRNC).

- Improving Parks’ Trails
• Providing Green Links, Green Active Centre at the Neighbourhood
• Improving Existing Parks’ Amenities and Providing Adequate Accessible Amenities
• Redesign Parks’ Entrances and Provide Accessible Pedestrian Routes to the Main Entrances
• Improving Parks’ Signage and Information
• Improving Parks’ Safety and Security
• Providing a Beautiful and Attractive Natural Rest Stop

Finally, based on analysis and recommendations developed in the previous steps, three face-to-face interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted to gather more information regarding highlighted issues that the park users will face in terms of accessibility and physical features. In the first place, the researcher’s findings and recommendations were presented to interviewees to get input into the research study and also to identify any other issues that had not been considered in preliminary findings with respect to accessibility, facilities, and amenities. The second theme of the interview was about identifying potential barriers and challenges in terms of implementing the author’s recommendations. Lastly, further discussion was conducted to find out whether any other parks planning issues related to accessibility and physical features should be considered (please see appendix B for Interviews’ Sample Questions). It was identified that accessibility issues and accessibility standards are priorities for future plans and new designs. According to Facility Accessibility Design Standards (City of Kingston, 2009), all new facilities and amenities that are owned, leased, or operated by the City of Kingston and that are designed for public uses will have to be compatible with accessibility standards and guidelines. Therefore, it is important for planners to create public spaces with amenities and facilities which are accessible for all people of different ages and abilities. Above all, local parks should be considered as important assets in each neighbourhood and should be carefully planned and designed to help to increase social interaction and physical activities in the community.
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“It's amazing what we can create by Bringing People together” ¹

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Urban parks and open green spaces are very important to the quality of life especially in our urbanized society. They provide social and psychological services which are significant for the livability of modern cities and people’s well-being (Chiesura, 2004). Park experience improves physical and mental health, reduces stress and provides a “sense of peacefulness and tranquility” (Chiesura, 2004, p. 130; Kaplan, 1983). According to Frederick Olmsted, “parks should be built as places where city residents could experience the beauty of nature, breathe fresh air, and have a place for ‘receptive’ recreation (music and art appreciation) as well as ‘exertive’ activities (sports as well as games like chess)” (LeGates and Stout in Cohen, 2007, p. 509). One of the most important issues that should be addressed in our society is that all of our public parks, their trails and amenities should be accessible to all people of different ages and abilities.

The purpose of this report is to assess and make recommendations for improvement to the accessibility and physical features of Shannon and Headway parks in Rideau Heights, Kingston, Ontario. According to 2010 Legacies Now and S. Golden & Associates (2008) and 8-80 Cities (2012), accessibility refers to improving physical access to the parks through improving accessible trails and entrances, improving physical access to any key assets within the parks for all people with different ages and abilities, and also evaluating the degree of physical accessibility of amenities such as washrooms, playgrounds and benches within the study area. Improving physical features mean proposing any accessible attributes like accessible washrooms, accessible trails and bike lanes, accessible picnic areas, lighting, activity generators and accessible public information and signage within the parks which result in improving parks aesthetic, safety and parks visitors’ physical activity and comfort to increase the quality of parks.

According to “A community needs assessment of north Kingston neighbourhoods”, a key priority for improving the quality of life in the community is the provision of activities for

¹ 2010 Legacies Now Website: http://www.2010andbeyond.ca/#/our-videos
children and youth over age six (Kingston Community Health Centre (KCHC), 2010). Although existing parks in the Rideau Heights Neighbourhood are viewed as neighbourhood assets and have the great potential to be spots for children and youth to play and do physical activities, they are underused. However, the Rideau Heights Neighbourhood also has strong community organisations such as Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (CRNC), North Kingston Community Health Centre (KCHC) and Wally Elmer Youth Centre which focus on providing and suggesting affordable programming and facilities for children and youth in the neighbourhood. Shannon and Headway parks that are located at the centre of neighbourhood have an abundance of space and hold great potential for different programs and activities. In last few years, the CRNC group approached the city to enter into a partnership to permit the construction of different facilities like a skate park, sport fields and a splash pad in Shannon park in order to attract more people, especially children and youth to this area (Cheung and Stirling, n.d). Moreover, CRNC has organized community gardens for residents around Shannon Park to encourage them to get out to the park and to improve social interaction. However, these parks in this neighbourhood are mostly underused and they are not encouraging for children and youth and also for their parents and seniors to walk or bike to these parks and do physical activities. In particular, there are concerns that the Shannon and Headway parks are not accessible for all people with different abilities, especially for seniors and people with disabilities. Therefore, besides providing programmed activities, improving accessibility and physical features of these two parks are important to improve the quality of these public parks and potentially attract more people to them. The topic of planning and design of accessible parks and trails is very important for urban planners and landscape architects to ensure a more enjoyable and accessible park experience for seniors and people with specific mobility requirements.

1.2 Study Area

1.2.1 Geography

Shannon and Headway parks, located in the heart of the Rideau Heights neighbourhood in the north district of Kingston, Ontario, were examined for this research study. These two parks are also located close to Rideau Heights’s Public School and Wally Elmer Community Centre which are gathering places for people of all ages. Shannon Park is located at the corner of Wilson Street
and Conacher Dr., and Headway Park is located within Compton St., Weller Ave., and Wilson St. exactly in front of Shannon Park (please refer to map 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3).

1.2.2 The North District of Kingston

The north district of Kingston is made up of five diverse neighbourhoods including Inner Harbour, Kingscourt, Marker’s Acres, Rideau Heights and Williamsville. The total population of all these 5 neighbourhoods is 22,358 people which is about 20% of the total Kingston population. Although there are significant differences between neighbourhoods in terms of income, home ownership and education, it is important to mention that the north Kingston average family income is 22% below the city average and 22.7% residents in this area are without high school diploma (Kingston Community Health Centre (KCHC), 2010).

1.2.3 Rideau Heights Neighborhood

The Rideau Heights neighbourhood consists of the lands between the railway tracks to the south, and Highway 401 to the north and between Division Street and Montreal Street (Housing Department, 2012). The population of Rideau Heights is 5600 people, with close to half (46.1%) of families living on low incomes (KCHC, 2010) and close to 14% of its total population is over 65 years old (City of Kingston, Planning and Development Department, 2006).
Map 1.2: Rideau Heights neighbourhood
*Source:* City of Kingston, retrieved from
http://maps.cityofkingston.ca/KMaps/WebPages/Map/FundyViewer.aspx

Map 1.3: Shannon and Headway Parks in Rideau Heights Neighbourhood
*Source:* City of Kingston, retrieved from
http://maps.cityofkingston.ca/KMaps/WebPages/Map/FundyViewer.aspx
1.3 Research Questions

The objective of this research study is to develop recommendations for improvements to the accessibility and physical features of Shannon and Headway parks in Rideau Heights, Kingston. This goal will be achieved by addressing the following research questions:

- What design and planning strategies will improve accessibility to the park, within the parks, and between the parks, for people of all ages and abilities?
- What design and planning strategies will improve physical features (facilities and amenities) within the parks in order to improve active living and physical beauty?

1.4 Report Structure

This report consists of five chapters. In the first chapter, the overview of the research topic, study area and research questions are addressed. Chapter 2 outlines the research method used to collect data to address research questions. In this chapter the evaluation checklist and data collection are introduced. Chapter 3 presents a detailed overview of the evaluation checklist used for analysis of the study area. Based on the evaluation checklist described in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 analyses the study area in terms of quality and accessibility standards. Finally, Chapter 5 provides recommendations based on results and findings from Chapter 4. This chapter examines the potential for implementing the recommendations by presenting outcomes from key informant interviews. Possibilities for future research are provided.
2. Methodology

2.1 Overview

Two parks, Shannon and Headway, in the Rideau Heights Neighbourhood in North Kingston, Ontario were used as case studies for this research study. Case study research as a method investigates a contemporary phenomenon and employs multiple sources of evidence that converge in a “triangulating fashion” in order to validate research findings (Yin, 2009, p. 116). “Case studies often serve to make concrete what are often generalizations or purely anecdotal information about projects and processes” (Francis, 1999, p. 1). Yin (2009) indicates that the case study design must have five components: the research question, its propositions, its units of analysis, a determination of how the data are linked to the propositions, and criteria to interpret the findings.

Data for this report has been gathered by employing three qualitative research methods. The methods help to assess and to analyse existing conditions of the case study, in order to then develop recommendations for improvement to the accessibility and physical features of Shannon and Headway parks in Rideau Heights, Kingston, Ontario. These qualitative methods are: literature and document review, direct observation, and interviews.

- **Literature and Document Review**: Review of relevant literature pertaining to parks and trails design, 8-80 cities, universal design guidelines, accessibility design guidelines (focused on Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines), and physical activity was carried out. Key document reviews included: ‘If I Could Change One Thing’: A Community Needs Assessment of North Kingston Neighbourhood (KCHC, 2010) and Rideau Heights Community Renewal Plan, Background Information (Housing Department, City of Kingston, 2012); The literature review and document review were analysed to gather the following contextual information:
  - Contextual analysis
    - History and importance of public parks
    - Physical features (amenities and services in parks and trails) that improve physical activity
    - Physical accessibility and universal design principles
    - Accessibility measures and standards
Direct observation: The main method of data collection for this research study was direct observation using externally valid evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria for this report has been developed through utilizing three design guidelines including the Accessible Parks and Trails Assessment Report (2010 Legacies Now\(^2\) and S Golden and Associates, 2008), City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (City of Toronto, 2004), and Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) (City of Kingston, 2009). Direct observation was conducted to obtain the following information through a site inventory analysis and evaluation:

- Amenities in and around the parks (evaluating their quality and accessibility which improve physical activities, safety, comfort)
- Collecting some quantitative data such as the number of benches, their heights, height of drinking fountains and the width of paths in the study area.
- Parks’ linkages
- Parks’ opportunities and weaknesses
- Pictures and maps to provide visual support and better understanding of the researcher’s observations

Interview: Based on information drawn from the Analysis and Recommendation sections, three in-depth semi-structured and face-to-face interviews were conducted (please see appendix A for Approval of General Research Ethics Board’s (GREB) Application). Interviewees were people with skills and expertise in park and open space planning, physical activity, social services and community development. Conducting interviews was helpful to fill knowledge gaps, validate research findings, and to achieve data triangulation. While it was ideal to interview existing and potential park users, it was beyond the scope of this research study because of a lack of feasibility and recruitment. There were some challenges to find a true representation of park users, and also people who I could recruit, may not be true representatives of existing or potential park users. The interview sessions focused on three main themes:

- Getting input about the researcher’s preliminary findings

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\(^2\) 2010 Legacies Now Transitioned to LIFT Philanthropy Partners in February 2011;
Opportunities and challenges to implementing recommendations arising from the research

Further issues for discussions

2.2 Evaluation Criteria

In the first step, a thorough literature review was undertaken to develop and understand the most appropriate parks assessment toolkit in terms of accessibility and physical features evaluation. Based on literatures and criterion used in other evaluation guidelines and checklists especially those focused on parks and trails, evaluation criteria for this research study was created to assess study areas’ accessibility and physical features. The evaluation design guidelines studied for developing parks and trails accessibility checklist for this report were Accessible Parks and Trails Assessment Report (2010 Legacies Now and S Golden and Associates, 2008), Accessibility Design Guidelines (City of Toronto, 2004) and Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) (City of Kingston, 2009). These design guidelines are intended to provide frameworks for future development which are complied with the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation provided under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, C11 (the AODA). The Accessible Parks and Trails Assessment Report includes a step-by-step guide for conducting an accessibility assessment of parks and trails. It also contains an Accessible Parks and Trails Inventory (APTI) spreadsheet to take inventory of physical assets in a park, and Accessibility Standards to measure the accessibility level of assets, information and services. As noted by the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies, “the purpose of this guide is to help park organizations to make better strategic decisions about managing and upgrading accessibility in their parks” (2009, p. 9). The Accessible Parks and Trails Assessment Report was the major toolkit that was utilized in this report to create evaluative criteria to assess and evaluate the accessibility and physical assets of the study area. City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines and FADS were utilized to complement the main toolkit and criteria descriptions and accessibility principles. The Safety and Security section also supplemented the main toolkit drawn from the City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines and Facility Accessibility Design Standards.
Table 2.1 shows the 24 evaluation criteria that have been developed to identify the existing amenities and evaluate the accessibility of assets, services and links of selected parks in the study area. These criteria are major criteria that should be considered in designing all parks and trails to make all amenities and services accessible for all people of different ages and abilities.

Table 2.1: Evaluation Criteria

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<tr>
<th>Amenities</th>
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<td>• Washrooms</td>
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<td>• Showers (indoor/outdoor)</td>
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<td>• Picnic Areas</td>
<td>• Width</td>
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<td>• Telephone Pay Stations</td>
<td>• NO Barriers/Hazards</td>
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<td>• Garbage/Recycling</td>
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<td>• Drinking Water Fountain or Water Faucet</td>
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The assessment report for the Accessible Parks and Trails developed by 2010 Legacies Now and S Golden & Associates (2008) formed the basis of these criteria. These criteria were then complemented with studying academic literature and other accessibility design guidelines including the City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines and Facility Accessibility Design Standards (FADS) to identify any additional criteria. However, as the main objectives of this research study are to first, identify what essential amenities should be provided to the study areas and then to evaluate existing amenities in terms of accessibility to make these parks more attractive and usable for people and increase physical activity for people of different ages and abilities, this researcher mainly focused on the following components (Please see table 2.2) for this research study. These criteria are the main features of any parks. Improving these features
can help to encourage people to walk or bike in and to parks and will help to increase physical activity among children, youth, adult and seniors with varying abilities.

Table 2.2: Parks’ Amenities and Accessibility Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Assets “Amenities”</th>
<th>Exist or Not Exist</th>
<th>Universal Design Evaluation</th>
<th>Shannon Park</th>
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<tr>
<td>Playground (splash pad, ice rink)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Park Kiosk Signage-Park Map</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information/reception desk/concession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Main Entrance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### 2.3 Data Analysis Methods

In the first place, the existence of the important and basic amenities and services in the study area was evaluated. The check mark (✔️) in the created toolkit indicates the existence of each criterion in the study area and the multiplication sign (❌) indicates that the criterion does not exist in the study area. In the next step, a Likert point scale ranking system was used for the analysis of the data collected for this research study. One of these five points was assigned to each criterion and represent by symbols to indicate the degree of accessibility of existing amenities in the study area. Figure 3.1 shows the symbols used to represent the degree of accessibility of amenities and trails in the study area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bicycle Racks</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Links</strong> “Paths and Trails”</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Slop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surface</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resting Areas</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Width</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO Barriers/Hazards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Edge protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rest Stops/Benches</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety and Security</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Figure 2.1: Point Scale Ranking](image-url)
2.4 Limitations and Future Research

The researcher used the modified parks and trails accessibility guidelines based on the *Accessible Parks and Trails Assessment Report* (2010 Legacies Now and S Golden and Associates, 2008) and *Accessibility Design Guidelines* (City of Toronto, 2004) to analyse this research study. The *Accessible Parks and Trails Assessment Report* (2010 Legacies Now and S Golden and Associates, 2008) which is a general guideline complementing the Report on Accessible Parks and Trails in British Columbia shaped the main outline of this research evaluation criteria and then some changes were established through the literature review and reviewing the City of Toronto *Accessibility Design Guidelines* (City of Toronto, 2004) and the Facility Accessibility Design Standards (City of Kingston, 2009) to make the most comprehensive parks accessibility checklist for the study area.

Regarding generalizability, although the current toolkit was created to evaluate two parks in the Kingston, Ontario, it can also be used in assessing all parks in different neighbourhoods and with different settings. However, data was collected for this research study and the outcome of the evaluation criteria cannot be applied to other study areas as 1) each park has its own amenities and services that may not be as same as other parks; 2) some of the data collected in this research study is quantitative such as the number of benches, their heights; height of drinking fountains and the width of paths and may vary in different parks. The evaluation criteria used in this research study does not incorporate criteria for measuring aesthetics, specific features like services and information of public parks; improving these criteria are very important to make public parks more attractive for people to increase physical activity (e.g. walking and biking) but fall outside the parameters of the study. While different methods were used to collect data for this research study, additional interviews with a focus group of the neighbourhood residents or conducting questionnaire to understand the public’s feedbacks about the study area would have benefited this research study. However, due to time constraints, these components were left out and are strongly recommended for inclusion in future studies.
3. Accessibility Evaluation Checklist

3.1 Physical Accessibility and Universal design principles

According to City of Toronto’s *Accessibility Design Guidelines* (2004), “Public parks, parkettes, and playgrounds should be designed to be used by people with varying abilities/disabilities and with universal access principles in mind” (p. 24). Furthermore, “The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association Policy states that play develops inter-personal and social awareness, intelligence and physical skills and that play is an equalizing medium for children with differing abilities/disabilities” (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association website cited in, City of Toronto, 2004, p. 25). Accessibility and equity are two important indicators of a well-functioning urban system (Nicholls, 2001). Pred (1977) indicates that quality of life within a city is related to the accessibility of its inhabitants to green environment and specifically to recreational open space opportunities. Accessibility is important to a variety of park users of different ages and abilities and should be considered for: 1) seniors, 2) people with physical disabilities, (e.g., individuals who use mobility devices (wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, canes, crutches); 3) people with hearing impairments (e.g., individuals who use the hearing aids); 4) people with visual impairments; 5) families with strollers and small children and 6) people with developmental, cognitive and mental disabilities (Chen, 2001; 2010 Legacies Now and S. Golden & Associates, 2008). Gant (1997) draws attention to the increasing prevalence of disability associated with an ageing population while indicating that location and physical arrangement and physical accessibility of the built environment have significant influences on mobility of people with disabilities.

Universal design principles which consider the needs of as many people as possible, without the need of adaptation, should be applied to site planning, design, implementation, and maintenance. Accordingly “the benefits of universal design are safer and more welcoming parks and trails for all. Universal design guidelines permit flexibility, if equal or greater accessibility can be provided by a different or more creative design solution” (2010 Legacies Now and S. Golden & Associates, 2008, p. 5). The principles of universal design are:
**Principle 1- Equitable use:** The design should be useful and available to any group of users. Parks Design: parks should be accessible to all users; the same means for all users should be provided; where possible design should be identical or at least equivalent for all parks visitors with varying ages and abilities.

**Principle 2- Flexibility in use:** The design should accommodate a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

Parks Design: parks design (e.g. amenities, facilities, paths and trails) accommodate a wide range of individual preferences and abilities and it should provide choice for all.

**Principle 3- Simple and intuitive:** Regardless of the user’s experience, knowledge, language skills, use of the design should be easy to understand.

Parks Design: understanding the park and context should be easy for different users with different ability, age, experience, knowledge, language or skill.

**Principle 4- Perceptible Information:** The design should communicate necessary information effectively to users of varying ages and abilities.

Parks Design: all information in parks should be communicated effectively to the user regardless of ambient conditions or the user’s sensory abilities.

**Principle 5- Tolerance for Error:** The design should minimize hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Parks Design: hazards and the adverse consequences of accidents are minimized (i.e., most used elements are the most accessible, hazardous elements are isolated or eliminated, provide warnings)

**Principle 6- Low physical effort:** The design should be effective and comfortable for users to minimize fatigue.

Parks Design: parks should be designed in a way that encourages physical activities in an efficient and comfortable way with a minimum of exhaustion.

**Principle 7- Size and Space for approach and use:**

Parks Design: appropriate size and space (e.g. seating areas, picnic areas, parking, washrooms, playgrounds, etc.) should be provided for approach, reach, manipulation, regardless of user’s body size, posture or mobility.
3.2 Accessibility Evaluation Checklist Analysis

As it was indicated in Chapter 2, a review of relevant literatures and accessibility design guidelines was carried out to aid in the selection and collection of the evaluation criteria which were used in the analysis of the accessibility and quality of physical features in the study area. The assessment report for the Accessible Parks and Trails developed by 2010 Legacies Now and S Golden & Associates (2008) which is based on Universal Design Principles (please refer to Section 3.1) and City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (2004) formed the basis of these criteria. The following sections describe each criterion and its features from Table 2.1 in detail.

3.2.1 Parking

Policy: “Designated accessible parking space(s), whether external or internal, should be provided within 30m of the main accessible entrance and/or any other accessible entrances” (City of Toronto, 2004, p. 14).

- A protected or designated route should be provided from the accessible parking spaces to the main accessible entrance and/or other accessible entrances. The accessible zone should be as close as possible to entrance.

- The number of accessible parking spaces should not be less than 4 for the first 100 spaces (i.e. 1:25 parking spaces) and should be less than 2 spaces for each additional 100 parking spaces. At least 1 accessible parking space should be designated where the number of parking spaces is less than 25. At least one accessible parking space for wheelchair vans with a minimum of 3660 mm wide and 5385 mm long should be provided per 100 spaces.

- The walkway from accessible parking space should be featured with the accessible surface (e.g. firm, level, non-slip material with a texture contrasted with the adjacent surfaces) and also it should be clearly marked with an upright sign (1.5m from ground to bottom of sign) or pavement sign. No barrier curb cut should be provided on the accessible walkway which connect accessible parking space to entrance and other amenities.
### 3.2.2 Washrooms

**Policy:** “Although some public washrooms may not be occupied during the entire year, the washrooms should be accessible and should be designed in accordance with requirements of the Ontario Building Code, Section 3.8.” (City of Toronto, p. 33)

- At least one accessible stall per 25 stalls should be provided in public washrooms.
- The preferred side grab bar used in accessible stalls is the reversed “L” shaped type. And also an automatic faucet is recommended on basins.
- Accessible stalls should have minimum dimensions of 1500 mm by a recommended width of 1675 mm for use by persons with different abilities and/or need mobility aids and/or assistance. The dimension of an accessible unisex washroom should be at least 1700 mm.
- Stall doors should have a minimum of 810 mm clear width and 1220 mm clear space in front of washroom doors to ensure access. The door of the unisex washrooms should have 860 mm width. An automatic door opener is recommended for public washrooms whenever possible.
- Toilets with seats should be no lower than 430 mm and no higher than 460 mm.
- There should be at least one mirror with bottom edge of 915 mm above the finished floor to allow for viewing from seated position or alternatively a tilted mirror should be provided.
- A baby-changing table should be mounted no higher than 865 mm from floor level. The sink should have a clear space and knee clearance. Clear signage, Braille, or raised lettering should be provided outside the washroom.
3.2.3 Showers

Policy: “Where public showers are provided in exterior settings (e.g., as part of a campground, exterior swimming pool or other recreational facility), they should be designed to be accessible to persons using various mobility aids.” (City of Toronto, p. 31)

- Showers floors should be of firm and solid material and laid to drain. Any lip, threshold, or step at entry should be no greater than 13 mm high.

3.2.4 Picnic Areas

Policy: “Public picnic areas including parking areas and entrances should be accessible to persons of all ages and disabilities.” (City of Toronto, p. 26)

- Some of the picnic tables should be located close to the accessible paths and walkways for persons using mobility aids.
- Accessible picnic tables and benches should be designed in a way that allow persons using mobility aids to approach them from one or both ends, providing adequate knee and armrest clearance, and they should be available in a variety of sunny and shady areas. All picnic tables should accommodate wheelchairs.
- Accessible picnic areas should have a grade no greater than 1:30.
- Garbage cans, barbeque, woodpiles, etc. adjacent to the picnic area should be usable for people with different abilities.
3.2.5 Public Telephone Stations


- All controls or coin slots should be mounted not higher than 1200 mm. The width of telephone enclosures or recesses should be 750 mm with knee space below the phone shelf or equipment at least 685 mm clear.
- Public telephones should be located to one side of the walkway and they should be clear of door swings and any other obstacles. There should be enough space for access by persons using mobility aids. At least one telephone should be provided for people using wheelchairs.
- At least 100 lux (10 ft. candles) is recommended for lighting level at public telephones.
- TTY device (Text Telephone) should be provided for persons with hearing impairments where several public telephones are located side by side.
### 3.2.6 Garbage/Recycling

**Policy:** “Waste receptacles and recycling bins should be accessible to persons using various mobility aids and be permanently located to one side of any path or walkway so as not to encroach on walkway width.” (City of Toronto, 2004, p. 34)

- Waste receptacles should be set back 300 mm from walkways and they should be designed to be unobtrusive, with easy-to-operate hand controls and they should be clearly identified by suitable colours or signage as an aid to persons with visual limitations.
- Lids on waste receptacles should be easy to operate with one hand and their openings should be mounted no higher than 1065 mm from grade.

### 3.2.7 Drinking Water Fountains or Water Faucet

**Policy:** “Drinking fountains available to the public should be readily accessible and useable by everyone, regardless of age or disability.” (City of Toronto, 2004, p. 30)

- Drinking fountains should be securely mounted with 750 mm of clear knee space below to allow comfortable access by persons with different abilities.
• Spouts should be easily operable with one hand and should be mounted no higher than 915 mm.

• Drinking fountains should be located adjacent to accessible paths and they should be featured with an accessible surface with clear space in front.

3.2.8 Restaurants

Policy: “Cafeterias, restaurants, cafés, bars, and/or other areas providing food or beverage services, should be accessible to persons with varying disabilities, including persons using mobility aids.” (City of Toronto, 2004, p. 90)

• In all areas and levels, accessible seating locations for persons using mobility aids should be provided. There should be knee clearance at tables and/or counters.

• There should be accessible entrance and paths to accessible tables.

• To allow persons using mobility aids to comfortably pass through the restaurant, aisle spaces between furniture, equipment and all fixed objects should be wide enough. The width of major aisle should be at least 1065 mm; the narrowest aisle should be a minimum of 810 mm.

• Menus should be available in alternative formats.
3.2.9 Benches
Policy: “Park benches or seating areas should be readily available for children and older persons. Benches and seating areas should be accessible to a variety of users.” (City of Toronto, 2004, p. 24)

- Benches and seats should be mounted on a firm and level base like a concrete pad or brick pavers and they should be located on one side of public paths.
- Benches with back supports and arms to allow for easy transfer are preferable. A seat height between 405 and 460 mm with the depth of 500 to 600 mm is recommended.
- There should be at least one space with a minimum clearance area of 1015 mm by 1220 mm beside the bench for person using a wheelchair or scooter.

3.2.10 Rest Stops
Policy: “Where the length of accessible routes to accessible entrances exceeds 30 m, rest areas at intervals of 30 m are recommended”. (City of Toronto, 2004, p. 13)

- Rest areas should include space for a bench, wheelchair and scooter while are located to one side of paths with at least 1200 mm depth. There should be accessible surface and clear space around and beside bench.

3.2.11 Playgrounds
Policy: “The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association Policy states that play develops interpersonal and social awareness, intelligence and physical skills and that play is an equalizing medium for children with differing abilities/disabilities (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association in City of Toronto, 2004, p. 25). “Play areas and recreational equipment, or other amenities should generally be designed to be accessible to and useable by children with varying abilities/disabilities.” (City of Toronto, 2004, p. 24)

- There should be an accessible route to the play space from accessible parking places and/or other main accessible routes (For accessible routs and paths please see section 3.2.17).
- There should be an accessible resilient surfacing compatible with current Canadian Safety Association Standards (e.g. there should be no pea gravel or sand). “Accessible surfaces can
include impact-attenuating tiles made of recycled rubber and engineered wood fibre that meet the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) requirements for accessibility and safety.” (Canadian Standards Association, 2007, p. 20)

- Seating areas preferably in shade areas with clear space beside benches should be provided.
- All playground equipment should meet Playground equipment meets CSA –Z614 Standards.

![Adjustable Basketball Hoops](image)

![A Low Platform Helps Children Transfer onto Play Equipment](image)

**Figure 3.6: Accessible Play Equipment and Spaces**
*Source: City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines, p. 24*

### 3.2.12 Park Kiosk Signage-Park Map

- Park Maps should meet basic signage requirements (Please see section 3.2.14)
- There should be accessible path to the park kiosk signage/map.
- Significant grade changes should be identified on maps.
- There should be enough information on maps about trails, such as distance, grade and cross slope to enable users to decide whether to attempt a trail. All restrooms, drinking water and trail lengths should be marked on park maps.
- Rest areas and distance between should be indicated on maps.
- In park maps “You are Here” should be identified.
- It would be better if a tactile map (map with a raised outline) of all trails and features are present at the start of the trail to benefit persons who have visual limitations.

![Accessible Park Map](source: City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines, p. 29)

3.2.13 Information/Reception Desk/Concession

- The counter should be mounted less than 900 mm above floor with knee clearance.
- Menu should be available in alternative formats and pens and papers should be available for communication.

3.2.14 Signage

Policy: “A comprehensive exterior signage and way-finding system is required at every major site or facility, to assist visitors with varying disabilities to locate [park features], appropriate parking and accessible entrances.” (City of Toronto, 2004, p. 37)

- Highly visible and contrasting colours (e.g., white or yellow on a black, charcoal, or other dark background such as brown, dark blue, dark green, or purple) are recommended for designing signage. Light grey or pastels are unacceptable colours for background.
• Bold ‘sans-serif’ lettering (e.g., Helvetica) with 24 point font on a highly contrasting background is preferable for signage and it should be legible at typical viewing distances.
• Centre of sign should be 1170-1575 mm above grade to be observable from seating or standing positions.
• There should be alternative formats of signage at entrance of all buildings and amenities.

3.2.15 Main Entrance
• Main Entrance and/or other accessible entrances should provide a safe, direct, level and obstacle free path of travel for persons with mobility or visual limitations.
• There should be at least one accessible path/sidewalk to the main entrance for pedestrians and persons using mobility aids and it should be of firm, level, and non-slip materials with a minimum width of 1675 mm.
• Clear signage indicating accessible entrance should be available at the main entrance.

3.2.16 Bicycle Racks
Policy: Fixed bicycle racks should be located to one side of walks, paths, or entrances so as not to impede the normal path of travel or snow clearing activities etc.

3.2.17 Links (Paths, Walkways and Sidewalks)
Policy: “All entrance paths/sidewalks in a public right of way and/or walkways for pedestrians and persons using mobility aids must be of firm, level, and non-slip materials and are recommended to be a minimum of 1675 mm wide to allow two wheelchairs or scooters to pass one another. In no case should sidewalks be less than 1525 mm wide where two-way traffic is expected.” (City of Toronto, 2004, p. 8)
• 3.2.17.1 Slope: 5% (1:20) gradient or less is recommended for all paths, walkways and sidewalks with unlimited distance. For maximum distance of 15 m 5.1% to 8.3% (1:12) slope and for maximum distance of 9 m 8.34% slope is permitted. Slope greater than 10% is NOT permitted.
• 3.2.17.2 Cross Slope: it should not exceed 3%. 5% maximum is permitted where is necessary for proper drainage.
• **3.2.17.3 Surface**: Materials used in sidewalks, paths and walkways should be firm, stable and level with joints no greater than 6 mm wide. Where grating must be located in sidewalks, its openings should not be wider than 13 mm and its bars should be perpendicular to the path of travel.

• **3.2.17.4 Resting areas**: Resting areas should be provided every 15 m for gradient between 1:20 and 1:12 and should be provided every 9 m for slopes between 1:12 and 1:10. Distances can increase between areas depending on site conditions. Resting areas should be at least 1200 mm deep with space for a bench, wheelchair and scooter.

• **3.2.17.5 Width**: All paths, walkways and sidewalks should accommodate persons using mobility aids and should be at least 1500 mm wide; however, 1675 mm width is preferable. Paths on parks could be minimum 920 mm wide (1500 mm minimum for boardwalks). Where path is less than 920 mm wide, passing spaces by dimension of 1500 X 1500 (or at an intersection) every 60-90 m should be provided. Paths can be 810 mm wide if distance is maximum 600 mm.

• **3.2.17.6 Barriers/Hazards**: All paths should be free of any barriers or hazards such as protruding obstacles, overhanging signs, branches, etc. to aid persons with visual limitations and using mobility aids. No object should protrude into the path more than 300 mm with a maximum of 680 mm above the ground. There should be adequate warning/signage for hazards.

• **3.2.17.7 Edge Protection**: If drop from path is greater than 75 mm, edge protection with the minimum height of 75 mm should be provided at least on one side of the walkway. If drop from the path exceeds 600 mm, a railing should be provided.

### 3.2.18 Safety and Security

• **3.2.18.1 Lighting**: “All lighting over pedestrian routes should be evenly distributed, provide a reasonable colour spectrum, and minimize cast shadows for persons with low vision.” (City of Toronto, 2004, p. 36)

  • Adequate lighting should be provided over paths, walkways and park amenities such as parking, play spaces, washrooms, rest areas, etc. Supplementary lighting should be provided to highlight park maps and way-finding signage.
• Lighting levels for all accessible pedestrian entrances should be 100 lux (10 ft. candles) to aid persons with visual disabilities. On frequently-used pedestrian routes such as paths, stairs and ramps 30 lux (3ft. candles) lighting level is recommended. In accessible parking areas at accessible parking spaces and along accessible routes from areas of parking to accessible entrances, lighting level should be a minimum of 50 lux (5 ft. candles).

• 3.2.18.2 General measures: A comprehensive Emergency Plan should be developed to address the needs of persons with varying disabilities as well as elderly people. A call bell or two-way communication device at the main accessible entrance should be provided. An accessible public telephone at or in close proximity to the main accessible entrance should be provided to accommodate persons waiting for a ride or persons requiring emergency assistance.
4. Analysis

This chapter evaluates physical features (amenities and facilities) of Shannon and Headway Parks in terms of physical accessibility standards based on 24 evaluation criteria developed on Methods Chapter (Chapter two). Each criterion is evaluated separately based upon the Accessibility Design Standards Checklist created in this report study (Please see Chapter Two) and the researcher’s direct observations. The assessment is summarized in table 4.1 using a point scale ranking system based on the use of ideograms. The value assigned to each criterion indicates the degree of physical accessibility standards of amenities and facilities within the parks and is represented by the symbols as shown in figure 4.1 below.

![Figure 4.1: Point Scale Ranking used in Evaluation Criteria](image)

Results from the analysis of the degree of physical accessibility standards of physical features within Shannon and Headway Parks are summarized in table below and subsequently each criterion is evaluated separately in the following sections.
Table 4.1: Evaluation of Physical accessibility Standards of Physical features within Shannon and Headway Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park Assets “Amenities”</th>
<th>Exist or Not Exist</th>
<th>Universal Design Accessibility Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shannon Park</td>
<td>Headway Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washrooms</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showers (indoor/outdoor)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic Areas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benches</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Pay Stations</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garbage/Recycling</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking Water Fountain or Water Faucet</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest Stops</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>NO Barriers/Hazards</td>
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<td>Edge protection</td>
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<td>Rest Stops/Benches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety and Security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Measures</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- None

### 4.1 Parking

**Shannon Park:** (Evaluation Value: Fair )

Shannon Park’s existing parking space is located close to the main entrance (within 30m) of the park. However, 1) there are not any designated accessible parking spaces available for people with disabilities; 2) an accessible route from existing parking to the main entrance which meets accessibility standards (section 3.2.17) is not provided; 3) its surface is not featured with accessible surface standards (e.g. firm, level, non-slip material with a texture contrasted with the adjacent surfaces) and it is not suitable for people using mobility aids; and 4) there is not any accessible sign (neither upright sign nor pavement sign) marked on the parking. Therefore, it is
obvious that the existing parking of Shannon Park is in poor condition in terms of meeting accessibility standards and improving existing parking in accordance with accessibility principles (section 3.2.1) is significant.

**Headway Park:** (Evaluation Value: Poor)

Headway Park does not have any clear parking space. There is one parking lot on the west side of the park between residential areas and the Headway Park and it seems that this parking space has been used by both park’s visitors and residential visitors. However, the existing parking space does not meet accessibility standards well, as was mentioned in section 3.2.1. There is not any clear space for people with disabilities on this parking lot. This parking lot is far from the main entrance and there is no designated route for people using mobility aids from this parking lot to the main entrance of the park (please see section 3.2.17). The existing parking space is not marked with any accessible sign as well.
4.2 Washrooms

Shannon Park: (Evaluation Value: Fair )

The existing public washrooms available for visitors in the park are not in good condition and do not meet accessibility standards well. There are only two washrooms (one for females and one for males) available in the entire park and adjacent to park’s splash pad. Mostly, these washrooms are used by children who are playing in the splash pad as change/shower rooms although these existing washrooms do not have any shower stalls or even showerheads. The reversed “L” shaped type as a side grab bar is used in stalls, but faucets on basins are not automatic. Total measurements (e.g. dimensions of stalls, doors, toilets and clear spaces) of existing washrooms meet accessibility principles in accordance with section 3.2.2 of this report, but their doors are not facilitated with automatic door openers.

Headway Park:

Headway Park does not have any public washroom available for its visitors; therefore, no evaluation could be made.

4.3 Showers

Shannon Park:

Although there are different activities at the splash pad and sports fields in Shannon Park, there is not any accessible public shower available for visitors who spend their time at this park.

Headway Park:

Headway Park does not have any public showers available for its visitors and so no evaluation could be made.
4.4 Picnic Areas

Shannon Park: (Evaluation Value: Good ☑)

There is not any specific zone in the Shannon Park designated as a picnic area. There are only some picnic tables adjacent to the splash pad and public washrooms of the park. However, in terms of accessibility standards, they are located close to the accessible walkways for people using mobility aids and they accommodate wheelchairs and allow persons using mobility aids to approach them from one or both ends with adequate knee and armrest clearance.

Figure 4.1: Shannon Park’s Picnic Area
Source: Author

Headway Park:

Although Headway Park has a potential to be a picnic spot, it does not have any picnic areas available for park visitors.

4.5 Benches

Shannon Park: (Evaluation Value: Fair ☐)

There are a few benches in the entire park available for visitors and they do not completely meet accessibility standards (i.e., none of them have arms support for easy transfer for seniors or people using mobility aids). There are not enough accessible benches around the park’s sports fields, playground and along the park’s walkways (i.e., there is no accessible bench along the
park’s trails). The existing benches are very old and in poor condition. There are only two benches in good condition near the playground by the public school at the north side of the park; however, they are not completely in accordance with accessibility standards.

Headway Park: (Evaluation Value: Fair 🌟)

There are only two benches in the entire park available for the park’s visitors. These two benches are old and they do not meet accessibility standards well (i.e., none of them have arms support for easy transfer for seniors or people using mobility aids). There are not any benches along park’s main walkway as well.

4.6 Garbage/Recycling

Shannon Park: (Evaluation Value: Good 🌟)

There are 8 garbage bins in the entire park. However, they are not enough for park users. These existing garbage bins are not easily operable by hand and they are not in suitable colors or signage to be clearly identified by persons with visual limitations.
Headway Park: (Evaluation Value: Fair 🟢)

Garbage bins in Headway Park like Shannon Park do not meet accessibility standards very well. They are not in suitable colors (please see section 3.2.6) and they are not easily operable by hand for people with disabilities.

4.7 Playgrounds, Splash Pad and Sports Fields

Shannon Park: (Evaluation Value: Very good 🟢)

There are two playgrounds, two sports fields and one splash pad at the Shannon Park. The playground which is located close to the public school on the North side of the park is in good condition, but there is no accessible route to this space. Its surfacing is not in accordance with Canadian Safety Association (CSA) Standards. However, there are two benches available close to the playground and they are in good quality in terms of accessibility standards. The other playground located at the East side of the park is in poor condition and its equipment does not meet accessibility standards. Only one bench is provided around this playground for parents watching their children playing in the playground. There is not any accessible route to the playground. Its surfacing is not compatible with CSA Standards. Lack of accessible routes to the sports fields and lack of accessible seating areas close to sports fields are major problems at this park.

Figure 4.3: Shannon Park’s New and Old Playgrounds
Source: Author
**Headway Park:** (Evaluation Value: Fair)

There is one playground in Headway Park. This existing playground looks very old (through researcher’s observation) and its equipment is not in accordance with accessibility standards. The walkway that slopes uphill towards the playground is not accessible for seniors and people using mobility aids. Its surfacing does not meet Canadian Safety Association Standards as well.

![Figure 4.4: Headway Park’s Playground](source: Author)

**4.8 Main Entrance**

**Shannon Park:** (Evaluation Value: Fair)

The main entrance of Shannon Park is not welcoming and clear. The main entrance is also not accessible for people using mobility aids. Shannon Park’s main entrance is not wide enough to be suitable for wheelchair/scooter users and seniors using mobility aids and also there is an iron bar in the middle of the entrance obstructing it.

![Figure 4.5: Shannon Park’s Main Entrance](source: Author)
**Headway Park:** (Evaluation Value: Fair ☢)

The front entrance of Headway Park is wide enough and has a potential to be a great and welcoming main entrance of the park. However, the existing chain hanging from this entrance make it not accessible for the park’s visitors especially ones using mobility aids. The existing chain obstructs pedestrian accessibility to the park. Headway Park’s main entrance and route are mainly recognized as a fire lane rather than a welcoming entrance to the park.

![Headway Park's Main Entrance](image)

**4.9 Links (Paths, Walkways and Sidewalks)**

**Shannon Park:** (Evaluation Value: Fair ☢)

Walkways in the Shannon Park run almost the entire park, but only a few of them meet accessibility standards. The main walkway (entrance path) from the park’s main entrance to the park’s splash pad and public washrooms meet minimum width requirements to allow two wheelchairs or scooters to pass one another. Material used in this main walkway is firm, stable and level. However, the rest of walkways in Shannon Park (e.g., walks to playgrounds, sports’ fields and community gardens) do not meet accessibility standards at all. Their width is less than accessibility standards (1500 mm) and their surfaces are not suitable for people using mobility aids. There is a ditch at the centre of the park that splash pad, public washrooms and community gardens are located on one side of it and play grounds and sports fields are located on the other side of this ditch. However, there is not any accessible walkway passing this ditch and the existing small bridge over the ditch is not usable for seniors and people with disabilities.
Headway Park: (Evaluation Value: Fair)

Most of the walkways in Headway Park go uphill. The main walkway is wide enough, but its slope is not appropriate for seniors and people using mobility aids. There are no accessible walkways towards the park’s playground and green hill.
4.10 Safety and Security

**Shannon Park:** (Evaluation Value: Good)

The safety and security of visitors of Shannon Park is a big concern. The park is not well lit at night and there is no emergency or security device (e.g. a call bell or two-way communication device) at the park. This park does not have any accessible public telephone(s) at, or in close proximity to, its main accessible entrance. A phone would accommodate people waiting for a ride or persons requiring emergency assistance. However, there are clear views of the park from its surroundings as this park is located at the centre of the neighbourhood and is surrounded by residential areas, public school and Wally Elmer Youth Centre. Moreover, different activities and events which are mostly programmed by Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (CRNC) are held at the Shannon Park during the year. Therefore, these options that involve the presence of people out in public activities and events can act as eyes on the street or natural surveillance and help park visitors to feel safer.

**Headway Park:** (Evaluation Value: Fair)

Headway Park like Shannon Park is not well lit at night and does not have any emergency or security device (e.g. a call bell or two-way communication device) and any public telephone for
its visitors. However, the only aspect of safety of this park is that it is surrounded by a residential area and this option can act as eyes on the street or natural surveillance.
5. Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations are being offered to the City of Kingston Park Development Department, North Kingston Community Health Centre and Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (CRNC) to consider improving Shannon and Headway Parks in terms of their accessibility and physical features for future developments.

5.1.1 Improving Parks’ Trails: The trails in both parks should be upgraded to become multiuse accessible trails. This would require designing accessible bike lanes and pedestrian walkways to enable all visitors of varying ages and with varied abilities to walk and bike through the parks. As noted in section 4.9, trails in Shannon and Headway parks are not in good condition in terms of accessibility. Therefore, creating the accessible trails which meet accessibility principles (as was mentioned in section 3.2.17 of this report) is strongly recommended. Accessible park trails should be created within parks and close to a park’s activity areas including around play grounds and Shannon Park’s sports field. Moreover, in order to increase physical activity amongst residents in the neighbourhood, creating accessible bike lanes all along park trails are recommended.

![Accessible Multiuse Trails in Public Parks](http://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/secrets-world-8217-s-happiest-cities/story-20106034-detail/story.html)

5.1.2 Providing Green Links, Green Active Centre at the Neighbourhood: As mentioned before, Shannon and Headway Parks are located at the centre of the Rideau Heights neighbourhood and in proximity to important activity centres such as Wally Elmer Youth Centre
and Rideau Heights Public School. Therefore, it would be greatly beneficial to consider these two parks as a single green zone at the heart of the neighbourhood to create a linked accessible public space for visitors of all ages and abilities. To achieve this, providing a continuous accessible green links (walkway and bike lane) in accordance with section 3.2.17 of this report between Shannon and Headway Parks and around them is strongly recommended.

Map 5.1: Accessible Green Links, Green Active Centre at the Neighbourhood
Source: Original Map retrieved from City of Kingston Website; Designed by Author
5.1.3 Improving Existing Parks’ Amenities and Providing Adequate Accessible Amenities:

5.1.3.1 Seating areas: Providing additional accessible seating areas (e.g. accessible benches and Picnic tables) which meet the accessibility principles of section 3.2.4 and section 3.2.9 along the entire parks’ trails, located within the parks and close to parks’ playgrounds and sport fields is strongly recommended. As noted in sections 4.4 and 4.5, the accessible seating area in both parks is insufficient and should be improved so that all visitors of different ages and varying abilities can enjoy a better experience.

![Examples of Accessible Picnic Area; ADA Accessible Bench with Armrests; Accessible routes to Seating Areas](http://kilconaparkdogclub.ca/page/8; http://site-furnishings.columbiacascade.com/?PageData=baseproductsdetails&catid=1&catid2=10 http://www.indiana.edu/~nca/monographs/4picnictables.shtml)

5.1.3.2 Washroom: As noted in section 4.2, the existing washroom in Shannon Park is in poor condition and Headway Park does not have any public washroom available for its visitors. Therefore, it is important to ensure an adequate supply of accessible public washrooms available for visitors with different ages and varying abilities. Recommended public washroom should meet accessibility standards mentioned in the section 3.2.2 of this report.

5.1.3.3 Drinking fountains: Although drinking water fountains are one of the necessary features in public places to provide clean and fresh water for public, neither Shannon Park nor Headway Park have a drinking fountain available for their visitors. Therefore, accessible drinking fountains which meet accessibility standards of section 3.2.7 of this report should be installed in different locations of parks including park’s entrances and close to sport fields and play grounds.
5.1.3.4 Public Showers: An accessible public shower which meets accessibility standards (please see section 3.2.3) should be provided for children who play on the splash pad and people who play on the sports fields.

5.1.4 Redesign Parks’ Entrances and Provide Accessible Pedestrian Routes to the Main Entrances: Parks’ entrances should be designed in a welcoming way as they give parks’ visitors the first impression and the experience of what the place will look like. Existing entrances in both parks in the study area are not welcoming and do not meet accessibility standards. As a result, improving the parks’ entrances and their main routes in a way that is accessible and attractive for all people of different ages and abilities is strongly recommended. The more exciting and welcoming main entrances are, the more visitors who would experience these parks. It is worth noting that accessible park maps and information (mentioned on section 3.2.12) should be placed in the proximity to the parks’ entrances to provide enough information for the parks’ users.

5.1.5 Improving Parks’ Signage and Information: Good and accessible park signage can provide enough information for people to find their way and desirable activities around the park while helping them to maintain the image of the park. As demonstrated in this study, (See table 4.1, both Shannon and Headway parks fail to provide adequate signage and information for their visitors. Therefore, providing an accessible park kiosk with signage information which meets users’ needs is strongly recommended. It is also recommended that this park kiosk signage information meet accessibility standards of section 3.2.12 of this study and will be installed at the main entrance of both parks.
5.1.6 Improving Parks’ Safety and Security: As it was mentioned in section 4.10 of this report, both parks are not safe enough as they are not well lit and do not have any emergency or security device (e.g. a call bell or two-way communication device). Therefore, making improvements to increase visitors’ safety and security is strongly recommended in both parks to reduce crime and vandalism and increase parks’ users’ enjoyment and comfort. According to Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), providing well-lit, active and overlooked places will improve safety and security in built environments.

5.1.6.1 Improving Lighting: providing adequate lighting within parks, around the playgrounds and along the parks’ trails to improve safety and security during dark times of the day is strongly recommended.

5.1.6.2 Improving Active and Passive surveillance: Increasing accessible programmed activities or activity generators including community gardens, food vendors and special events (e.g. music, dance or theatre) within parks to improve safety and security by increasing eyes on the parks (natural surveillance) and encourage involvement of residences with varying abilities and ages is strongly recommended. Moreover, providing some devices like public surveillance cameras and accessible public telephone pay stations are recommended.

5.1.7 Providing a Beautiful and Attractive Natural Rest Stop: The last but definitely not the least recommendation for this research study is to provide an accessible and attractive rest stop at the centre of Shannon Park. There is a ditch in the landscape at the middle of Shannon Park that has the great potential to be a nice rest stop at this park. By redesigning this section of the park and creating some basic features like accessible benches, shades and water fountains, this area can be a great and beautiful location for people to get together and help to improve social interaction and sense of community.
5.2 Implementing the Recommendations

Overall, the three interview respondents confirmed the report’s research findings and analysis of the study area. They all agreed with the lack of accessibility standards and poor quality of most of physical features (amenities and facilities) of both Shannon and Headway Parks. However, they identified a range of issues about the recommendations coming out of the research and shared their concerns that should be considered further. Two interviewees noted that the main barrier to providing accessible amenities and facilities in and around these two parks is funding. They also noted the lack of a budget to implement the recommendations. Participant 2 and participant 3 mentioned that some recommendations like improving lighting and programmed activities in the study area have priority. One of the interviewees mentioned that as these two parks are categorized as neighbourhood parks and are close to residences that spending money on installing some facilities like public showers and increasing the numbers of public washrooms is not necessary. The interviewee believed that parks’ visitors are able to go home to take a shower after playing sports or doing other activities. In terms of accessibility standards, one of the interviewees noted that if any new facilities or amenities will be installed in public parks, then they should be completely compatible with accessibility standards and guidelines. However, upgrading the current facilities such as old washrooms, seating areas and playground to be accessible for people of all ages and abilities may not be possible to implement due to current budget limitations.

Figure 5.4: Left: Current Situation of the ditch in Shannon Park. Right: One alternative for future design.
One of the challenges pointed out by participant #3 was planning for Shannon and Headway Park as an integrated green space. In her point of view, this would be a great idea to see Shannon and Headway Parks as a green centre at the heart of the neighbourhood, but this idea would have some planning challenges for implementation. An accessible and attractive rest stop at the centre of Shannon Park was addressed as a great idea by all interviewees.

All of the interviewees believed that installing some facilities like accessible drinking fountains is significant. And also, they all agreed that neither of the main entrances of the parks are accessible and welcoming. It was verified by interviewees that there is a lack of accessible and appropriate routes and trails within these two parks and necessary implementations should be considered in this regard.

According to the interviews conducted for this research study, accessibility issues and accessibility standards have been considered in City programming and are identified as a priority for future plans and new designs. They recognized that all new facilities and amenities that will be designed for public spaces and public parks will have to be compatible with accessibility standards and guidelines.

Based on the interviews, there is an opportunity to further incorporate the feedback of the interviewees into recommendations for the City of Kingston. It was clear from the interviews that there are challenges to updating and maintaining old parks in the city, including Shannon and Headway parks. For this reason, parks planners will have to consider how to prioritize park improvements according to their impact, cost and feasibility – something that falls outside the scope of this Master’s report, but that would be important for planners to consider in order to sustain the existing city parks system. A focused and prioritized list of improvements will help the City of Kingston to carefully consider where to allocate money for park improvements in the years ahead.

5.3 Conclusion

This report provides an analysis and makes recommendations for improvement to the accessibility and physical features (amenities and facilities) of two parks, Shannon Park and Headway Park, in the Rideau Heights Neighbourhood located in the North District of Kingston, Ontario. To address the research questions, data was collected by employing three qualitative
research methods: a literature review, direct observation, and interviews. The literature review was carried out to create a comprehensive checklist for evaluating the degree of accessibility and quality of amenities and facilities in the study area and also to find out what necessary physical features are not existed in these two parks. Direct observation was conducted based on the evaluation criteria created in the checklist to analyse the study area. Findings (please refer to Table 4.1) showed that both Shannon Park and Headway Park lack necessary amenities and facilities and also most of the current physical features in these two parks are in good quality and are not accessible for all people of varying ages and abilities. Based on the findings of the analysis, seven recommendations were offered to the City of Kingston, Parks Development, North KCHC and Community Response to Neighbourhood Concerns (CRNC) to provide them with the basic policy and design strategies which would result in improving the quality of the parks and increasing parks use. Finally, key informant interviews were conducted to validate research findings and get input into the report’s findings and recommendations.

Future research could include measuring aesthetics, features, services and information of public parks in the existing evaluation checklist as these criteria are important in open space planning to make public parks attractive and increase parks use. The topic of shade is an important one in parks planning, and is difficult to assess in the winter months, when the field research was conducted for this report. Shade is especially important as comfort is related to heat and temperature and is a public health concern for older adults and children. A detailed shade study would be an added benefit to any future improvement study of Shannon and Headway Parks, and is strongly recommended as an area for future research. Moreover, additional interviews with a focus group of the neighbourhood residents and conducting questionnaire to understand the public’s feedbacks about the study area could be included in further studies.
References:


Canadian Parks and Recreation Association Website http://www.cpra.ca/


City of Kingston Website http://maps.cityofkingston.ca/KMaps/WebPages/Map/FundyViewer.aspx


Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09687599727010

Housing Department, City of Kingston, (2012). Rideau Heights Community Renewal Plan. Kingston: City of Kingston

Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0304-3924(85)90058-9


Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2010.03.003


Appendix A: Approval of the GREB Application

May 14, 2013

Mrs. Saharsadat Aghabozorgafjeh
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Queen’s University
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

GREB Ref #: GSURP-176-13; Romeo # 6008107
Title: "GSURP-176-13 Redesign of Shannon and Headway Parks: Improving Their Accessibility, Amenities, and Facilities"

Dear Mrs. Aghabozorgafjeh:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GSURP-176-13 Redesign of Shannon and Headway Parks: Improving Their Accessibility, Amenities, and Facilities" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Adverse Event Report). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To make an amendment, access the application at https://eservices.queensu.ca/romeo_researcher/ and click Events - GREB Amendment to Approved Study Form. These changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

John D. Freeman, Ph.D.
Professor and Acting Chair
General Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. Leela Viswanathan, Faculty Supervisor
    Dr. Leela Viswanathan, Chair, Unit REB
Appendix B: Sample Questions for interviews:

The interview will be conducted in order to validate research. The questions will be about the following themes:

1. GETTING INPUT ABOUT MY PRELIMINARY FINDINGS:
   a. What do you think about my findings gathered through the checklist about accessibility and physical features?
   b. What else I should consider?
   c. What areas need more focus on, and why?

2. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THE RESEARCH
   a. What are the opportunities and challenges to improving accessibility and physical features in the Shannon Park?
   b. What are the opportunities and challenges to improving accessibility and physical features in the Headway Park?

3. FURTHER ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION
   a. Are there any other parks planning issues that should be considered that are related to accessibility and physical features?